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50TH GENERAL COUNCIL

A/G prayer event set for gathering in nation's capital

By John W. Kennedy

The 50th Assemblies of God General Council, convening in Washington, D.C., this summer, will conclude with a "Turn America, Pray the Way" worship and prayer service on the National Mall. The biennial gathering from July 31 through August 3 will be the first for the Fellowship since 2001, before terrorist attacks, troop deployments and multiple financial scandals rocked the nation.

A/G leaders believe the time of uncertainty and spiritual decay is the most fitting time to seek the Lord's help.

"Now more than ever we need to turn to God, as a nation, as a Fellowship and as individual Christians," says General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask.

It will mark the first meeting ever for the Assemblies of God in the nation's capital, and the Fellowship wants to make the most of the gathering by conducting the Sunday afternoon service, August 3, that asks God for forgiveness and to heal the nation.

The 2½-hour Turn America service begins at 4 p.m. on the National Mall and will feature a time to pray for government leaders, including President Bush, who has been invited to the event. "Those called by God to serve in an elected office face great challenges," Trask says. "It's up to each of us to lift these men and women up in our prayers."

"It makes a huge statement to our nation about our church," says Potomac District Superintendent Robert Rhoden. "It also encourages those who serve in

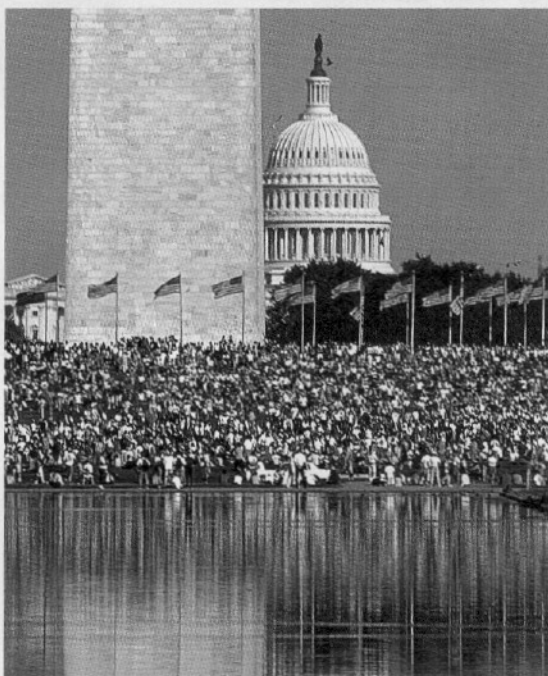
where Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I have a dream" speech 40 years earlier, in August 1963.

"It can be a time when we can say the future is as bright as the promises of God," Rhoden says. "We can offer hope to our nation about what it really means to rely on the Lord and to show that our trust and confidence ultimately are not in human systems but in the Creator of the universe."

Those receiving prayer will include three Assemblies of God members who are serving in the U.S. Congress: Rep. Todd Tiahrt of Kansas, Rep. Jo Ann Davis of Virginia and Rep. Marilyn N. Musgrave of Colorado.

"Our nation is at a very critical time in our history," says Musgrave, 54, a member of First Assembly of God in Fort Morgan, Colo. "It's entirely appropriate for believers to come here and specifically pray that God will preserve our nation."

Musgrave didn't expect to be in Congress when raising four children and running an agricultural business with her husband, Steve. But her concern for conservative values led her to serve first on a local school board in 1990 and



Capital occasion: The Promise Keepers gathering in 1997 brought 1 million men to D.C.

government who identify with our community of faith." Among the invited guests are A/G members Attorney General John Ashcroft and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vernon Clark.

The service will be held on the Mall



then in the state senate, where she sponsored a marriage preservation initiative. She began her first congressional term in January.

"We as Christians are to affect every area of our lives and culture," Musgrave told PE Report. "It's important to have people with a Christian worldview in elected office."

Tiaht, 51, is in his fifth congressional term. "General Council is a wonderful time to fellowship and to meet with people of common faith, remembering that we're all part of the Great Commission," says Tiaht, a member of Valley Center (Kan.) Assembly of God. "That this year's convention is in Washington, D.C., emphasizes the need for us to be involved in our nation's government at whatever level. America's quality of life has been diminished by Christians not being more active in government."

Rhoden has asked A/G pastors in the Potomac District to gather at the National Mall with members of their congregations in lieu of holding individual services that Sunday evening. The A/G Fine Arts Festival celebration service will precede the prayer rally on the National Mall.

Trask will be the keynote speaker at the July 31 family gathering that kicks off the General Council. He will preach a message on "Pray the Way," recognizing dependence on God's power and help.

L. John Bueno, executive director of A/G World Missions, will host an August 1 missions celebration that begins with a parade of nations and includes the premiere of *The Time Has Come*, a musical under the direction of J. Dan Smith.

Deborah M. Gill, national director of

the Division of Christian Education and the commissioner on discipleship for the Fellowship, will speak August 2 on "Equipping America — Sunday School and Discipleship Emphasis."

The national youth convention will be held July 31 to August 3 in conjunction with the General Council. Ambassadors in Mission will hold an outreach in the metro area during the period in conjunction with Convoy of Hope and youth from across the nation.

Other events held before the church-wide gathering include a district Women's Ministries and Missionettes leadership seminar, church leader seminar, church worship conference and Christian school leadership symposium.

Outreaches such as HealthCare Ministries, Mission America, Chi Alpha Ministries and Single Adult Ministries will have special functions during the General Council.

Rhoden says A/G members who attend will have fond spiritual, cultural and political memories of the visit. He notes that most of the historic monuments, museums and government buildings in Washington, D.C., have free admission.

Online registration for the 50th General Council is available at <http://ag.org/>. The Web site includes housing and registration information as well as an updated schedule of events. ■

Christian gatherings in Washington

Historic calls for spiritual awakenings have been issued from the nation's capital since even before it was in Washington, D.C. In 1775 the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia asked the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a nation. President Lincoln proclaimed a day of "humiliation, fasting and prayer" in 1863. A joint resolution of Congress declared an annual day of prayer in 1952. In 1988, President Reagan amended the event, establishing the NDP as the first Thursday of every May.

Prayer has been the foundation of key evangelical gatherings in Washington. In 1980, a Washington for Jesus rally organized by John Gimenez engulfed the National Mall, where an estimated 600,000 Christians came to praise God as well as to

pray for the nation and its leaders. WFJ also held rallies in 1988 and 1996, with the latest one drawing 75,000 people.

In 1997, Bill McCartney's Promise Keepers came to Washington for "Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men," where 1 million men came for a time of repentance, reconciliation and prayer. PK reports it as the largest religious gathering in U.S. history.

In 2000, tens of thousands of youth and parents converged on the Mall for The Call DC to "turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers."

And the gatherings continue. On June 7, the annual March for Jesus will occur in Washington and around the globe, a time of prayer and praise in the streets.

— Tim Callahan in Washington, D.C.